

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please AMEND claims 43-49, 52 and 53, as follows. For the Examiner's convenience, all claims currently pending in this application have been reproduced below:

1-41. (Previously Cancelled)

42. (Previously Added) An exposure processing system, comprising:

an exposure apparatus for exposing a wafer to a pattern on a reticle in a first atmosphere;

CI a reticle stocker having a sealing member and an atmosphere controller for controlling an interior of the sealing member to a second atmosphere, for stocking the reticle in the second atmosphere;

a transfer path for transferring the reticle from said reticle stocker to said exposure apparatus and for transferring the reticle from said exposure apparatus to said reticle stocker; and

a load-lock chamber for transferring the reticle to said reticle stocker, after the reticle is received from an exterior of said exposure processing system and an atmosphere replacement is performed to change an exterior atmosphere to the second atmosphere.

43. (Currently Amended) The system according to claim + 42, wherein said transfer path has a second load-lock chamber for transferring the reticle to said exposure apparatus, after the

reticle is received from said reticle stocker and an atmosphere replacement is performed to change the second atmosphere to the first atmosphere.

44. (Currently Amended) The system according to claim + 42, wherein said exposure apparatus transfers the pattern on the reticle to the wafer using an F₂ excimer laser; and

wherein an oxygen concentration of said first atmosphere is equal to or less than 1 ppm and an oxygen concentration of said second atmosphere is equal to or less than 50 ppm.

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45. (Currently Amended) The system according to claim + 42, wherein said atmosphere controller has evacuation means and inert gas injection means, and repeats alternatively an evacuation by said evacuation means and an inert gas injection by said inert gas injection means.

46. (Currently Amended) The system according to claim + 42, further comprising confirmation means for confirming whether the reticle have been stocked in said reticle stocker for a predetermined time, when the reticle is transferred from said reticle stocker to said exposure apparatus.

47. (Currently Amended) The system according to claim + 42, wherein said reticle is stored in a reticle box;

wherein said load-lock chamber performs atmosphere replacement to control an external atmosphere of said exposure processing system to the second atmosphere while said reticle box is opened, after the reticle stored in said reticle box is received from an exterior of said exposure processing system; and

wherein said transfer path transfers the reticle stored in said reticle box from said reticle stocker to said exposure apparatus while said reticle box is closed.

48. (Currently Amended) The system according to claim 42, wherein said reticle is stored in a reticle box,

wherein said reticle stocker stocks the reticle stored in said reticle box in said second atmosphere while said reticle box is opened; and

wherein said transfer path transfers the reticle stored in said reticle box from said reticle stocker to said exposure apparatus while said reticle box is closed.

49. (Currently Amended) A device manufacturing method, comprising:
a step of performing an exposure process for a wafer using an exposure processing system according to claim 42; and
a step of developing the wafer.

50. (Previously Added) A stocker for stocking a substrate covered with a substrate cover, comprising:

a sealing member for storing the substrate covered with said substrate cover;

a first atmosphere controller for controlling an interior of said substrate cover to a first atmosphere; and

a second atmosphere controller for controlling a space between an interior of said sealing member and an exterior of said substrate cover to a second atmosphere;

wherein a control of said first atmosphere controller and a control of second atmosphere controller are performed simultaneously.

51. (Previously Added) An exposure processing system, comprising:

an exposure apparatus for performing an exposure process for a substrate covered with a substrate cover in a first atmosphere;

a substrate stocker having a sealing member for storing said substrate, and having an atmosphere controller for controlling an interior of said substrate cover to a second atmosphere and for controlling a space between an interior of said sealing member and an exterior of said substrate cover to a third atmosphere; and

a transfer path for transferring the substrate between said exposure apparatus and said substrate stocker.

52. (Currently Amended) The system according to claim ~~40~~ 51, wherein said exposure apparatus transfers the pattern on the reticle to the wafer using F₂ excimer laser; and

wherein an oxygen concentration of said first atmosphere is equal to or less than 1 ppm, an oxygen concentration of said second atmosphere is equal to or less than 5 ppm and an oxygen concentration of said third atmosphere is equal to or less than 50 ppm.

53. (Currently Amended) A device manufacturing method, comprising:
a step of exposing a wafer to a pattern on a reticle using an exposure processing system according to claim ~~40~~ 51; and
a step of developing the wafer,
wherein said substrate is the wafer or the reticle.